

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 AID-05 EB-08 TRSE-00 STR-04
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R 230220Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5394
AMCONSUL UDORN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, LA, TH
SUBJ: THAI-LAO TRADE

REF: (A) VIENTIANE 1104, (B) VIENTIANE 1134

1. EMBASSY HAS DISCUSSED THAI EXPORT CONTROL REGULATIONS WITH OFFICIALS IN MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COMMERCE. THEY DENY THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY RESTRICTION ON EXPORTS TO LAOS BEYOND THOSE REQUIRED BY THAI SECURITY AND THE NEED TO ASSURE ADEQUATE SUPPLIES OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES FOR THE THAI MARKET. THERE ARE NO DISCRIMINATORY REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO TRADE WITH LAOS. THE LAO HAVE MADE NO OFFICIAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT THAI EXPORT CONTROLS, ALTHOUGH THE LAO EMBASSY IN BANGKOK DID LODGE A COMPLAINT REGARDING THAI RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORTATION OF LOGS FROM LAOS.

2. THERE ARE SOME 36 CATEGORIES OF GOODS UNDER EXPORT CONTROL ACCORDING TO THE COMMERCE MINISTRY OFFICIAL. IF MATTERS OF SECURITY ARE NOT INVOLVED THE LICENSE TO EXPORT IS GENERALLY GIVEN IN LESS THAN TWO WEEKS.

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3. AN INTERAGENCY BOARD INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, COMMERCE AND INTERIOR AS WELL AS THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL REVIEWS ALL REQUESTS WHICH COULD HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THAI SECURITY. WHEN ASKED FOR AN EXAMPLE OF SUCH AN ITEM, MFA OFFICIAL MENTIONED SHIPMENT OF STRUCTURAL STEEL FOR USE IN BUILDING A BRIDGE IN SOUTHERN LAOS

UNDER A SWEDISH AID PROGRAM. ON SUCH SHIPMENTS THAILAND NEEDS A GUARANTEE FROM THE AID-GIVING NATION THAT THERE WILL BE ON-SITE CONTROL TO INSURE THAT THE MATERIALS ARE ACTUALLY USED FOR THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THEY WERE GIVEN.

4. THAI OFFICIALS EMPHASIZE THAT THEY HAVE APPROVED ALL REQUESTS OF VARIOUS EMBASSIES IN VIENTIANE FOR PROCUREMENT OF GOODS IN THAILAND FOR EMBASSY USE AND CITE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE DIRECTIVES TO THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT AT NONG KHAI TO ALLOW SUCH GOODS TO CROSS WITH CERTIFICATION FROM THE THAI EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE WITHOUT REFERRAL TO BANGKOK.

5. MFA OFFICIAL DWELT AT LENGTH ON THAI DESIRE THAT LAOS DEVELOP ITS ECONOMY AND LIVE IN PEACE WITH ITS NEIGHBORS DESPITE THE DIFFERING POLITICAL SYSTEMS. HE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT THAILAND COULD NOT BE A CONDUIT FOR MATERIALS THAT WOULD BE USED AGAINST IT NOR COULD THAILAND EXPORT GOODS ESSENTIAL FOR MAINTAINING THE WELFARE OF ITS OWN PEOPLE.

6. EMBASSY BANGKOK DOES NOT HAVE INFORMATION ON EXTENT OF TRADE DECLINE OVER PAST FEW MONTHS AND NOTES REFERENCES IN PRESS TO THE END OF A MONTH LONG EMBARGO ON SHIPMENTS TO LAOS. WE WOULD APPRECIATE DOCUMENTATION OF SPECIFIC INSTANCES WHERE EMBASSY VIENTIANE BELIEVES THAT THE THAI ARE ACTING UNREASONABLY.

7. COMMENT: THE THAI BLAND ASSURANCES THAT EXPORT CONTROL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROCEDURES FOR LAOS ARE THE SAME AS FOR ANY COUNTRY IS ACCURATE. THIS GLOSSES OVER FACT THAT NO OTHER COUNTRY HAS THE SAME DEPENDENCE ON THAILAND BOTH AS TO A SOURCE OF GOODS AND AS TRANSSHIPPING POINT.
O'DONOHUE

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